

Site Visit to Chief Saunooke Bear Park, Cherokee, NC

June 2, 2010

Report by Laurie J. Gage, DVM, Dipl. ACZM

I accompanied ACI Andrea D'Ambrosio on a site visit to the Chief Saunooke Bear Park in Cherokee, North Carolina on June 2, 2010. We posed as tourists and paid to get into the facility. Later that day we did a site visit/inspection with ACI Cindy Lisle.

The only animals housed at this facility are bears. The three Asiatic bears are overweight but ACI Lisle stated they had lost weight since her last visit. One of these bears had a sparse haircoat over its hind end, and another had a slightly patchy haircoat. One of these bears exhibited some stereotypic behaviors when the public was not present. There were two Cinnamon bears, both in good body condition. The lighter bear exhibited some stereotypic pacing when no public was present. There was one Grizzly bear held by itself, and this bear exhibited the most stereotypic pacing behavior when the public was not present. All of the bears had medium-sized pools and elevated rock platforms. They all had tree trunks inside their enclosures and other items of enrichment. There were three juvenile bear cubs, and two younger cubs on display, and two small cubs used for photo shoots and held away from the general public and held in an approximately 200 square foot inside enclosure.

The diet for the bears consisted of mostly bread (white and wheat), apples and lettuce. Trays of food (bread, apples, lettuce) were sold to the public to feed the bears. There were also dog food dispensers where the public could buy a small handful of dog food to feed the bears. It was unclear but the bears may have also received dog food in their evening meal. I examined the dog food they had stored on site, which was milled locally. It did not contain any animal protein and it was made of primarily corn. I suggested a corn diet was fattening and a higher quality dog food with some animal protein (chicken or beef) would be better. The food trays sold to the public were made of a soft cardboard material and were reused. There was no protocol for how many times a food tray could be reused and we recommended the food trays be disposed of when they appeared soiled. We found several excessively soiled food trays in the recycle bins.



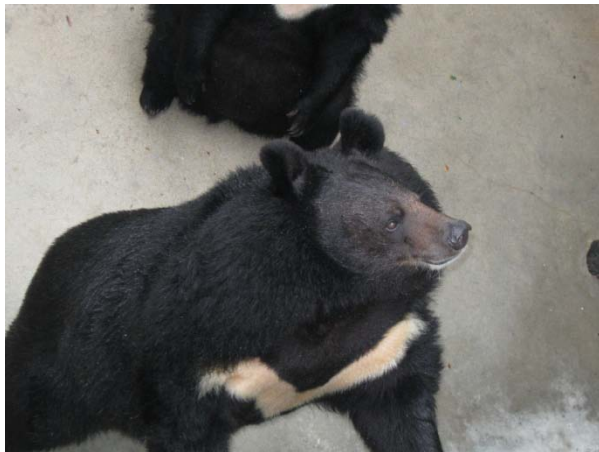
Soiled Food Trays in “recycle” bin



White and wheat bread in night quarters

While some bears exhibited some stereotypic behaviors, they would break out of these behaviors frequently to interact with the public or to do other normal behaviors. This facility appeared to have adequate shade and the bears were not forced to look into the sun to get their food rewards.

The diet for these bears is not optimal but the bears appear to be in fairly good condition. Some of the bears were overweight and need to be placed on a diet to allow for weight loss. I believe that bread, especially white bread, and corn-based dog food is a poor diet for bears. They should try to replace much of the white bread they feed with a more nutritious diet, and purchase a higher quality dog food.



Overweight Asian bears

The young cubs appeared bright, alert and active. Their body weight appeared to be within expected range. They were fed a formula of fresh goat's milk, applesauce, and oatmeal baby cereal. This appears to be an adequate diet for these animals.

Site Visit to Chief Saunooke Bear Park, 55-C-0125 Cherokee, NC

June 2, 2010

Report by: Andrea D'Ambrosio- ACI

Here is my summary of my visit with Dr. Laurie Gage and Cindy Lisle to the Chief Saunooke Bear Park in Cherokee, North Carolina on June 2, 2010. That same afternoon we conducted an inspection with ACI, Cindy Lisle.

This facility has 16 bears (Black, Grizzly, Cinnamon and Asiatic bears) and comprises adult's, cubs and juveniles. We entered the facility as "tourists" paying the admission and receiving food trays with admission. I also purchased dog food from the vending machines at the top of the observation platforms. There was a mix of two different types of dog food in the machines but the food was in good condition and palatable. The trays consisted of wheat bread, lettuce and apple pieces. These food trays are being re-used multiple times and there is a concern for contamination. A few of the trays were heavily soiled from previous feedings. In addition several of the bears at this facility appear overweight and it is difficult to regulate how much they consume from public feedings.

A few bears have learned behaviors that will earn them food reinforcement from the public. One Asiatic bear would stand up and turn around in tight circles when he/she saw a guest with food. This is the only bear that would do this, which indicates to me that the behavior was not "trained" by the zoo staff, but was "captured" and then reinforced unknowingly through public feedings. This means that at one time, this particular Asiatic bear stood up and started to turn, and more than likely a guest saw this and gave the bear a food item which then reinforced and "captured" what the bear had just done. The bear then begins to "turn" more often only to be reinforced more with food items. This became a very rewarding behavior to the bear and the bear now continues to offer this behavior frequently when guests are seen with food trays.

Several of the bears at this facility appeared overweight and they showed more interest in the apples and dog food rather than the bread and lettuce. Because the public is paired with food, people are reinforcing and enriching for the bears. Each bear pit at this facility had a water pool and several of the pools had rock work embedded in cement that went up the back side of the pool in a step fashion. Several of the bears would get in the pool and walk up the rocks to the top step. Most of the bear pits at this facility also had other enrichment items such as logs or tires or branches from overhead trees. This facility had a good amount of shade from the guest platform and from the natural trees hanging over the enclosures. Leaves and other natural items from the trees would fall into the exhibit that are naturally enriching.

I did witness some stereotypic behaviors in the Asiatic bears with one bear swaying at the water bowl nine times and then walking backward seven steps to make a curve around and start the pattern again. Another black bear would walk in a circular pattern multiple times. A Grizzly bear that was housed alone seemed to engage in the most stereotypic behavior and was walking along the front wall and swaying its head prior to turning and starting that pattern again. This bear is in an area of the facility that limits guest viewing and food items from the guests. The stereotypic behaviors were limited to the adults and not seen in the younger bears. The juveniles and cubs were very active in play behaviors chasing each other, play fighting and engaging with enrichment items in their enclosures. The juvenile's had a long enclosure and would get to almost a full run as they chased each other. Although the bear dens appeared closed, all of the enclosures had a second area of shelter for inclement weather. In addition because of the large pool areas with rock work, the bears were able to get out of visual range of each other if they desired.

During the inspection in the afternoon, we suggested putting live fish in the pools to encourage foraging behaviors.



Inspection Report

KOLE CLAPSADDLE

Customer ID: 3347

Certificate: 55-C-0125

Site: 001

(b)(2)High, (b)(7)f

CHIEF SAUNOOKE BEAR PARK

PO BOX 296

Type: ROUTINE INSPECTION

Date: Jun-02-2010

WEBSTER, NC 28788

3.125 (a)

FACILITIES, GENERAL.

(a) Structural strength. The facility must be constructed of such material and of such strength as appropriate for the animals involved. The indoor and outdoor housing facilities shall be structurally sound and shall be maintained in good repair to protect the animals from injury and to contain the animals.

***The first black bear enclosure has multiple cracks in the floor that are wide and several feet long. The enclosure housing the three yearling cubs has large wide cracks in the floor as well as concrete chunks flaking off the wall. The pool for the Asiatic bears has sections of the concrete chipped off. Cracked and chipping concrete does not allow for proper sanitizing of the enclosures. Feces and urine can become trapped in the openings causing odors and possible disease hazards. Sections of chipped or cracked concrete must be replaced or repaired. This affects 7 animals.
To be corrected by: 2 Jul 2010.

***The enclosure housing the black bear cubs has wire over the left side wooden wall. There are multiple wire points from the chin link and 2 x 4 wire. Some of these points stick approximately 3 inches into the enclosure. These sharp points are at about head height for the bears increasing the potential the animals could injure an eye. All sharp points must be removed from the enclosure to prevent injury. This affect two animals.
To be corrected by: 9 Jun 2010.

3.129 (b)

FEEDING.

(b) Food, and food receptacles, if used, shall be sufficient in quantity and located so as to be accessible to all animals in the enclosure and shall be placed so as to minimize contamination. Food receptacles shall be kept clean and sanitary at all times. If self-feeders are used, adequate measures shall be taken to prevent molding, contamination, and deterioration or caking of food.

***The facility is using heavy paper feeding trays to allow the public to feed the bears. These trays are being reused.

Prepared By:

CINDY E LISLE, A C I

USDA, APHIS, Animal Care

Date:

Title:

ANIMAL CARE INSPECTOR

Inspector 1064

Jun-02-2010

(b)(6), (b)(7)c

Received By:

KOLE CLAPSADDLE

Date:

Title:

OWNER

Jun-02-2010

JUN 16 2010



Inspection Report

Several of the trays on the counter ready to give to the public have food debris stains on them. Food absorbed into the paper can contaminate food placed on it during subsequent feedings. A method should be developed to determine how often trays are being reused and contaminated ones should be discarded. This affects 16 animals. To be corrected by: 12 Jun 2010.

An exit briefing was conducted with the licensee.

Prepared By:

Title:


CINDY L LISLE, A C I
ANIMAL CARE INSPECTOR
(b)(6), (b)(7)c

USDA, APHIS, Animal Care
Inspector 1064

Date:

Jun-02-2010

Received By:

Title:


KOLE CLAPSADDLE
OWNER

Date:

Jun-02-2010

JUN 16 2010